



# Statement: Our Approach to the Prevention of and Response to Gender-Based Violence

*This Statement should be read in conjunction with the definitions and content of the Prevention (and response) of sexual misconduct and gender-based violence policy.*

The Australian National University (ANU/the University) is responsible for and committed to providing a safe, inclusive and respectful ANU community where its members can study, work and live free from gender-based violence (GBV) and all forms of sexual misconduct. The ANU recognises the impact that sexual misconduct and GBV harm has not only on the individuals directly impacted, but also the broader ANU community.

The University's approach combines awareness, prevention and response strategies that work together as part of a holistic application to drive social and cultural change.

In our response to any disclosures and/or reports of sexual misconduct and GBV, we put the health, safety and wellbeing of those affected at the centre of our support and processes, working from a trauma-informed framework while also applying the ANU values and principles of procedural fairness.

Our policies and procedures:

- centre safety, equity, accountability, and cultural safety in alignment with the *National Higher Education Code to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence (2025)* (National Code GBV),
- embed a whole-of-institute approach where responsibility is shared across leadership, staff, students, affiliates, contractors, and visitors,
- commit to a trauma-informed, person-centred response,
- ensure ongoing monitoring, evaluation and reporting to drive cultural change.

ANU adopts the National Code GBV's definition of gender-based violence: any form of physical or non-physical violence, harassment, abuse or threats, based on gender, that results in, or is likely to result in, harm, coercion, control, fear or deprivation of liberty or autonomy, including technology-facilitated abuse, stalking, systems abuse and coercive control.

The following principles and concepts are key to the ANU approach to preventing and responding to GBV for our community.

## Principles

**Zero Tolerance:** No form of GBV or sexual misconduct is acceptable.

**Accountable leadership:** Leaders are responsible for the prevention of sexual misconduct and GBV and must empower all members of the ANU community to be informed, active bystanders who uphold and visibly champion these principles through their actions, words and decisions.

**Safety & Dignity:** Every person will be treated with dignity and respect. The University is committed to a safe process free from harm, retaliation, discrimination or abuse. The ANU provides disclosers and complainants autonomy to choose their response to experiences of sexual misconduct and GBV. The wishes of disclosers and complainants are considered seriously before any action is taken, and immediate safety (precautionary) measures will be imposed when necessary.

**Accountability & Fair Process:** Respondents are entitled to a clear, procedurally fair, and trauma informed process before any findings are made, and will be provided support and information. If a finding of sexual misconduct or GBV is substantiated at ANU, action will be taken proportionate to the conduct.

**Consistent Process:** Disclosure and report processes focus on safe, transparent, timely action for all members of the ANU community.

**Equity, Intersectionality & Cultural Safety:** Policy and practice recognise diverse lived experiences, including gender, sexuality, disability, culture, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander sovereignty, religion, class and age, understanding the many aspects of a person's identity and acknowledging these in the prevention and response activities undertaken by the ANU. Recognising and addressing cultural, linguistic and disability-based barriers to sexual autonomy and disclosure/reporting, including by providing appropriate support and cultural education to the ANU community.

**Prevention First:** An inclusive, safe and respectful environment for all members of the ANU community is actively fostered by investing in ANU community education, respectful relationships programs, bystander training and leadership accountability. Education will ensure a shared understanding of what constitutes sexual misconduct and GBV, the drivers and consequences of GBV, disclosure and report pathways, and support available – reinforcing that sexual misconduct and GBV is not tolerated.

**Consultation & Co-Design:** Education, strategy and process planning will include broad University and key stakeholder engagement, including the voices of those with lived experience, into our approach and outputs.

**Continuous Learning:** Working from an evidence-based approach to GBV prevention and response, regular review, consultation with students and staff, data monitoring and external benchmarking is undertaken.

**Intersectionality:** Recognising the ways in which different aspects of a person's identity can expose them to overlapping forms of discrimination and marginalisation. Intersectionality addresses and acknowledges gender, sexual orientation, Indigeneity, race, economic status, ability, or other factors can compound the impact of sexual misconduct and GBV, resulting in certain groups of people being more vulnerable and/or disproportionately impacted than other groups to the effects of gender-based harm, violence, discrimination and harassment.

## Key Concepts

**Bystander** means a person who observes, overhears or otherwise becomes aware of sexual misconduct or GBV occurring, but is not directly involved or taking part in the sexual misconduct or GBV.

**Coercion** means any act of pressuring, intimidating, manipulating, or threatening a person to obtain compliance or agreement. Coercion may involve physical force, emotional pressure, misuse of authority, or exploitation of vulnerability, and it invalidates consent.

**Consent** is the informed agreement to a sexual act that is freely and voluntarily given and communicated by saying or doing something.

Consent involves mutual and ongoing decision-making and respects the right of every person to choose whether or not to participate in a sexual act. Once given, consent can be withdrawn at any time.

Consent must be sought for each sexual act and is not to be presumed because of consent to a different sexual act.

More information about consent in the Australian Capital Territory can be found in the [Crimes Act](#).

If you're a student, more information about consent at ANU can be found in the [Discipline Rule](#).

**Zero tolerance** is an approach adopted by the ANU which means to:

- treat any notification of sexual misconduct or GBV received by the ANU seriously and, where necessary, investigate through the relevant formal University procedures;
- offer appropriate support when a disclosure or formal report is made; and
- implement proportionate disciplinary action where a finding of sexual misconduct has been made at ANU after concluding the appropriate investigative process.

A zero-tolerance approach does not mean that an allegation of sexual misconduct or GBV will automatically result in the respondent being removed from campus.

All investigations and inquiries in relation to a report will be conducted within the established processes of the ANU and in a procedurally fair manner.

Where an allegation of misconduct or serious misconduct is substantiated following a fair and appropriate investigation, any outcomes imposed will be proportionate to the nature and seriousness of the conduct and the relevant circumstances.

**Power imbalance** exists where roles, authority, status, age, or dependency reduce a person's ability to freely agree or refuse. Abuse of power to obtain sexual access or silence a person constitutes misconduct. In the context of GBV, power imbalances can increase vulnerability and risk of harm, particularly when one person uses their position or influence to pressure, coerce, or exploit another.

**Victim-Survivor** is a term that recognises individual autonomy in self-identification and acknowledges both the harm experienced and the resilience demonstrated. For the purposes of University misconduct processes, the term complainant is used by the institution to ensure procedural fairness, this does not preclude any complainant from their right to choose how they describe themselves.